

From the Luther of the
The Duty of Ministers to be nursing Fathers to the
Church; and the Duty of Churches to regard
Ministers as the Gift of Christ: 4474. d. 116
2

A CHARGE,

DELIVERED BY

The Rev. JOHN RYLAND, D. D. of Bristol;

AND

A SERMON,

DELIVERED BY

The Rev. S. PEARCE, M. A. of Birmingham;

IN THE DISSENTERS MEETING-HOUSE,

ANGEL-STREET, WORCESTER;

at the

ORDINATION

of the

The Rev. W. BELSHER,

To the Pastorate of the Baptist Church,

MEETING IN SILVER-STREET, IN THE SAME CITY;

Together with

An Introductory Address,

By the Rev. G. OSBORN,

AND ALSO

Mr. Belsher's Declaration of religious Sentiments.

Sold by BUTTON, London; BASKERFIELD, Worcester; BELCHER,
Birmingham; and JAMES, Bristol.

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W. CHARGE

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The Rev. John A. D. D. of Buffalo

С. В. А.

A SERMON

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The Rev. W. B. Fisher

of the Papers of the Hon. John C. Calhoun

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

1998

An Introductory Chapter

By the Rev. C. Osburn,

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M. B. Jones: Director of Fisheries

1990

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1912

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From D^r Ryland

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Meeting-House of the Baptist Society, in Silver-street, Worcester, being now rebuilding, they have for the present agreed to assemble for public Worship, with their Friends and Brethren in Angel-street; where the following very pleasing and instructive Services were attended on the 7th of December, 1796:—and the common Friends of christian *Love* and *Order* have requested this Publication, as exhibiting an amiable instance of both. May it prove a mean of mutual Comfort to the Churches, and of Edification to the Public!

Worcester, December 30, 1796.

CONFERTIUS

The Order of the Service.

Mr. T. EDMONDS read a portion of Scripture, and prayed;

Mr. OSBORN delivered the introductory Discourse;

Mr. L. BUTTERWORTH asked the usual Questions respecting the Church's free Choice of Mr. BELSHER to the pastoral Office, and his willingness to accept the same; which being recognized,

Mr. BELSHER read the Declaration of his religious Sentiments;

Mr. L. BUTTERWORTH committed him and the Church to the Divine Blessing, by prayer;

Dr. RYLAND delivered the Charge;

Mr. PEARCE addressed the Church, and concluded the Service with prayer.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

WHAT a pleasing sight is this day presented to you, my brethren and friends, in this place! Children of one family, acknowledging one Father, and uniting our christian affections and efforts, for the stability, order, and usefulness of the church of Jesus, and its ministers! By particular desire I am called upon, just briefly to introduce this solemn service, and to assign our reasons, as Protestant Dissenters, for such an observance. It is needless, perhaps, to inform this auditory, that we do not find in the word of God, any positive command for us formally to ordain:—that we do not pretend to any superior or spiritual authority over each other, as ministers of the same gospel:—and that we openly profess we can neither communicate, nor receive from man, any extraordinary gifts. We believe (with good Mr. Henry, on 1 Tim. i. 12) “that putting men into the ministry, is the work of JESUS CHRIST:”—that he is the supreme and only lawgiver in the church;—that scripture alone is our rule;—and that private judgment is sacred in religion. While, therefore, as to *civil* government, and the *lawful* authorities of our country, we are frank to declare our sincere allegiance, and not only *in words*, but in affection and *conduct*, “to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s:”—we are bound in conscience, as to the things of God, to “call no man master upon earth.” Yet, though we are obliged to disallow and reject the imposing dominion of any Lord-bishop, or of any Lord-brother, in the prescription of our faith or worship; yet we allow, and wish to observe, the propriety of religious services, in religious concerns: And
therefore,

therefore, according to scriptural example, and apostolic practice, we are met together this day, to help each other by our mutual prayers and advice, to *recognize* the solemn designation of our brother to the work of the ministry, and the interesting relation now avowed, between him and his friends in this city. Were I to chuse a text to sanction our practice, I should fix your attention on the apostle's account of a primitive ordination, conformable to divine appointment, as you have it recorded,—

Acts xiii. 3.

WHEN THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED, THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, AND SENT THEM AWAY.

In this business there was no mystery, no superstitious rite, no ceremonious pomp, no usurpation of prelatical authority: but there evidently appears great simplicity; pure devotion; love of order; submission to divine teaching; and true benevolence to men.

I. Consider here who were the ordained, or what is the essential character, and necessary qualification, of christian ministers? Plainly there were no prerequisites of human greatness; no heights of scientific attainments; no attachments of wealth or interest: but there were previously bestowed, and personally enjoyed,—

1. *Moral goodness*;—that is to say, the men set apart for this evangelic work, were well acquainted with the things of religion. They knew and felt the evidences and truths of the gospel. Their hearts were renewed by divine grace; and their lives corresponded with their profession and hopes. They were men of faith, of purity, of devotion, and of love unfeigned, both towards God, and the world: and such excellence of moral character, we deem essential to the being, and the acknowledgment of every minister, and pastor in the church of Christ. 86

Paul

Paul directs, 1 Tim. iii. 2, &c. "A bishop (or as rendered Acts xx. 28, overseer) must be blameless; the husband of one wife; vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler (or fighter) not covetous."

2. *Spiritual gifts*, though not miraculous, nor equal in all, yet are most important qualifications for every christian minister. As he cannot be a christian without moral goodness, so he cannot be a minister, a teacher, or pastor, without suitable endowments. Here we think it indispensable that there should be a sound understanding; an acquaintance with natural and revealed religion in its doctrines and requirements; an ability to lead the devotions of the people; a capacity for learning; and an aptitude and power to instruct, persuade, and comfort.

3. *Disinterested zeal* for the glory of God, for the edification of the church, and for the good of all mankind; this also is a most capital requisite in the ministerial character. This zeal is equally remote from selfishness, the love of ease, worldly ambition, and overbearing officiousness. Where those qualities are found and cultivated, we suppose there is every thing essential, especially when combined with human prudence, for the discharge of the ministry.

II. Observe, in the next place, who were the *ordainers*, and how did they ordain, or separate for the work of the gospel? It is said "There were in the church (*i. e.* the society of believers) "at Antioch, certain "prophets and teachers; and as they ministered to "the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate "me now Barnabas and Saul, for the work where-
" unto

“unto I have called them: and when they had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them, and sent them away: so they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.” Hence we learn, that divine influence was the prime mover, the call, and the commission of these persons. We learn that they were expressly set apart by their brethren, and *fellow members* of the church: and that this was attended simply by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands: *i. e.* not the hand of *one man*, as having any peculiar jurisdiction or gift, but the hands of several good men, who united their hearts and actions, as the servants of God, and the organ of the society’s good will. In like manner we would infer, and observe the will of God, calling our brethren to the ministry, and us to set them apart.

1. *From the direction and leading of Providence.* It is God who raises up and qualifies his servants: he fixes their habitation; he inclines their hearts to engage in his work; he directs the attention of his people; and while he calls them to his service, promises and affords all needful supplies of wisdom, strength, and encouragement. See Jerem. i. 4—8. 2 Cor. ii. 14—16.

2. *By the free choice of the people themselves,* we look upon ministers as called, and pastors as *virtually* ordained. For we must bear in mind, that such a service as this gives no fresh ability to our brother: Barnabas and Saul were eminent ministers of the gospel, *before* this separation: and all intended by us, who unite in the work of this day, is, solemnly to recognize the calling of our brother, as the object of his friends election and confidence.

3. *By solemn acts of devotion,* therefore, we conceive that we equally comply with the example of scripture—the

the declared will of God—and the wishes and feelings of his people in this matter. As to fasting and prayer, perhaps their union on this, as well as on other occasions, would be found peculiarly suitable and useful: certainly there is the greatest fitness and beauty in commending the minister of Christ to his special influence and blessing. And as to laying on of hands, it seems to me both highly proper, as the mark of concurring in this *designation*; as well as the original mode of intreating the divine benediction, upon particular persons. Vide Gen. xlviii. 14.

Such, brethren, are our views of *evangelical* ordination. We only desire to follow scripture direction and examples. We venerate the rights of conscience, and of Christ. At the same time we cordially wish well to all that love the gospel, however they may differ from us: and I sincerely say may peace and holiness be promoted by us all.

MR. BELSHER'S DECLARATION

OF HIS

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.

AFTER a serious and repeated perusal of the holy scriptures, earnest prayer for divine direction, and mature deliberation, I feel myself at liberty, with inward satisfaction, to state, without reserve, my views of religious truth, and I now declare my faith.

I. In the being of a God. In every direction I meet with evidence of his existence and perfections. The magnitude, variety, and harmony of creation—the preservation of the world—the pleasing vicissitude of the seasons—the

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wisdom

wisdom and design that appear in the dispensations of providence—the excellent structure of the human frame—the amazing powers of the immortal soul—with the pleasures of holiness, and the miseries that attend on moral evil—all these loudly proclaim his power and godhead.

II. Though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his praise, yet he has magnified his word above all his name. In creation, we perceive the operation of almighty power and infinite wisdom: In Providence, unspeakable condescension and unremitting care: But in revelation we learn his moral character: In the law appear unspotted holiness, and inflexible justice: In the gospel, sovereign goodness, and unbounded love! The doctrine of the cross is represented as a mirror, in which the perfections of God are to be seen to the greatest possible advantage; there, “as in a glass, we behold the “glory of the Lord;” for Christ is “the image of the “invisible God.” Nature’s display of God is partial—Revelation exhibits him “in all his round of rays compleat.” Through the sacred humanity of our Lord, the divine perfections are softened down in a manner suited to our feeble capacity; and instead of exciting terror, encourage hope. Here the sinner may be taught what he can learn no where else, a just God and a Savior; the inflexible judge, and compassionate father; the doctrine of remission, acceptance with God, the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection and blissful immortality. From the sublimity and excellency of the doctrines; the grace and glory of the promises; the freeness of the invitations; the purity of the precepts contained in the writings of the Old and New Testament; connected with the holiness and agreement of the inspired writers; the accomplishment of prophecy; the dispersion and preservation of the Jews; the evidence of miracles, and the astonishing influence of scripture doctrines

trines (through divine agency) upon the minds of men, I believe the Bible to be the word of God. The sacred pages, whose divine authority is supported by this body of evidence, I consider as entitled to our deepest reverence and most cordial affection; and receive this divine directory as an infallible guide of faith and practice; "to which we do well to take heed, as to a light to that shineth in a dark place."

III. I believe God to be a social being, "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the three who bear record in heaven." The same in essence, equal in majesty and glory. My inability to comprehend this doctrine, is no more an objection to its truth, than my not being able to comprehend my own being, is an objection to the reality of my existence. If I cannot comprehend my own existence, how, by searching, shall I find out God!

IV. I believe, in opposition to the doctrine of chance, that the events which take place in the natural and moral world, are objects of the divine purpose or decrees. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." The purposes of God I conceive to be sovereign, though not arbitrary; that is, without reason: They are infinitely wise and good; for if God purpose or decree, he must decree and act like himself—an infinitely wise and gracious Being. From the word of God I learn that believers are the objects of Jehovah's eternal choice. "God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth." Faith and obedience, I consider, as the effects, and not the cause of our election. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

V. I believe that God created the first man Adam superior to all other creatures on earth; being endowed with a rational and immortal spirit; for "the Lord God" "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"—The understanding was as clear as the light—the will pure and holy—the affections kept in due subordination—the memory, retentive—the conscience, peaceful and serene: This is to be made in the image of God, and after his likeness in the highest and most proper sense. In this state of rectitude, man had the law of God written in his heart; in addition to which he received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: and upon his attention to, or violation of this injunction, depended his enjoyment of God, or loss of happiness.

VI. As Adam was the first man, so I believe him to be the covenant head, and representative of all mankind, and that the consequences of his obedience or disobedience, did not merely extend to himself as an individual, but to all his posterity; wherefore, by his apostacy, he not only brought himself under the awful penalty of Jehovah's law, and lost the image and favor of God; but transmitted to all his descendants universal corruption and depravity, with the prospect of everlasting woe. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

VII. Man having destroyed himself, I believe God was pleased to reveal his purpose of grace and mercy, made with Christ the covenant head of his people, before the commencement of time; which "covenant is ordered in all things and sure;" and secures free pardon, full salvation, perfect righteousness, the promise of the spirit, and final glory to every believer. To realize this merciful design, in the fulness of time the Son of God became incarnate, assuming human nature, with all its sinless infirmities, as
 necessary

necessary to constitute him an able and suitable Savior. This interesting truth is declared to be without controversy the "great mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

Our Lord was not only made under the law, but by his holy life and vicarious death, he magnified and made it honorable: he has satisfied the demands of justice; glorified the divine character to the greatest possible degree; made an end of sin; and brought in an everlasting righteousness. On the cross he spoiled the powers of darkness, and ruined the empire of Satan. He was buried, and on the third day he rose superior to death and the grave: he ascended into heaven, to receive the honors due to his victories; to possess the reins of universal government; and to prepare mansions of bliss for all his followers.

VIII. I believe that all who are interested in the undertaking and work of the Redeemer, are, by the powerful influence of the Divine Spirit, called from darkness to light; from sin to holiness; from Satan to God. Their understandings are illuminated; their wills renewed; their affections sanctified; and in all their powers devoted to the Lord; being "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Faith and repentance are blessings of the new covenant, and are implanted in us by the power of the Divine Spirit—By faith we embrace the Savior, and build our hopes upon him for forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life—Repentance is that grace by which we are disposed to abhor ourselves, and determine no longer to live in the indulgence of sin—It teaches to deny ungodliness, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—Faith and re-
pentance

penitance never fail to produce good works; naturally
 “having their fruit unto holiness.”

Effectual calling and justification, I believe are inseparably connected—“Whom he called, them he also justified.” Justification I consider as a complete acquittal from imputed and contracted guilt: a deliverance from the destructive and condemning power of sin:—but our works or obedience have no meritorious influence on our acceptance with God, either in whole or in part; since we are justified alone by the righteousness of Christ imputed and received by faith.

All who are justified, are taken into the family of heaven; enjoy the blessings of grace; are the objects of divine love, and unremitting attention—they are the care of Providence, and the charge of angels. By virtue of adoption, they have a right to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away—they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ—Jehovah himself is their portion and reward.

Those who have received grace, will be crowned with eternal glory—the love, promise, wisdom, honor, and power of Christ, induce me to believe this comfortable truth, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ.”

IX. Christians, uniting and agreeing to walk together in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord; to strengthen each others hands; to bear each others burdens; and promote each others best interest; do constitute a gospel-church, of which Christ is the only head and Lord; so that whosoever exalts himself, and presumes to take part in the dominion with him, is no other than Antichrist, invading

vading the Redeemer's prerogative, and lording it over God's heritage—"One is your master, even Christ, and "ye are all brethren."

X. Baptism, and the Lord's-supper, are positive institutions of the gospel dispensation. The scriptural mode of administering the former, I apprehend, to be by immersion. The latter, I conceive, is designed to preserve alive an affectionate remembrance of the love, sufferings, and death of our Lord.

XI. At death our bodies will return to the earth, and our souls ascend to God, to receive an immediate and unalterable sentence to eternal life or death—to be admitted into heaven, or sent down to hell.

I believe that God has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ; when the awful trumpet shall be blown, and its alarm disturb the slumbers of the dead. Those who have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation; those who have done good to the resurrection of life everlasting. "Depart ye cursed," will fill the sinners heart with terror and despair; while those who have believed in the Savior, shall be cloathed with the garments of salvation, and admitted into the paradise of God—"Come ye blessed of my "Father, enjoy the kingdom prepared for you from before "the foundation of the world."

A CHARGE,

A CHARGE,

&c.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

AS I am called, by your own request, to address you, on the present solemn, but pleasing occasion, permit me to turn your attention to a passage, which appears to me well adapted to impress our minds, with some affecting and interesting ideas, justly applicable to the work of a Gospel Minister, and a Christian Pastor.

The expression to which I allude is contained in

NUMB. xi. 12.

—THAT THOU SHOUD'ST SAY UNTO ME, CARRY THEM IN THY BOSOM, AS A NURSING FATHER BEARETH THE SUCKING CHILD, UNTO THE LAND WHICH THOU SWAREST UNTO THEIR FATHERS.

THESE words are included in a complaining address, which was made to the Lord by Moses, in an hour of singular trial; when he was ready to conclude, that a task had been assigned him, too difficult for him to execute; so that he almost presumed to remonstrate with Jehovah concerning it: yet they contain a charge, which he acknowledged had been virtually, if not verbally, given him by the God of Israel; and which is couched in language beautifully descriptive of the nature and importance of his commission, and especially expressive of the greatest tenderness for Israel.

This

This charge, my brother, appears to me as justly applicable to our employment, as to that of Moses; though our sphere of action is less extensive, and our business more entirely spiritual. God is now no less careful of the souls of his people, than he was then, of the concerns of Israel after the flesh: and it surely requires as much attention, fidelity, and tenderness, to conduct christian pilgrims through a wilderness world, to a heavenly Canaan; as to guide the descendants of Abraham, to the earthly inheritance, promised by oath to their fathers. He who, in the days of old, conducted Moses and his people, and put his Holy Spirit within him, that he might act as the shepherd of his flock, has given as strict an injunction, and as gracious encouragements, to those whom he has made overseers of the church, which God our Savior has purchased, with his own blood.

Seasons of trial may occur, in which we may be tempted to complain, that our work is too heavy for us, and that we cannot bear the weight of the people alone; but then, to reflect on the far heavier trials endured by this man of God, who had the care of a whole nation, for forty years together, may tend to check our readiness to repine.—With what ingratitude did he meet, from those whom he brought forth out of the house of bondage? How deeply were they infected with the idolatrous customs of the Egyptians? How often did they murmur against Moses, and against God? How did they slight the manna which came down from heaven, and was daily spread round their tents; while they lusted for the fish, the cucumbers, and the melons, the onions, the leeks, and the garlic of Egypt: and for the sake of such sensual gratifications, were ready to return to the land of oppression, and deliver themselves again into the hands of their cruel task-masters? We cannot justify the impatience of Moses, but we may well

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acknowledge

acknowledge that far less trials would tempt us, to adopt the worst part of his language, and that we should be ready to ask God to kill us out of hand, that we might not see our wretchedness. But under the worst of our distresses, the divine injunction he quotes in our text, may prove some antidote against the dejection he expresses in the context; and a recollection of the Lord's indulgence and compassion, manifested on this occasion, may operate as a farther means of counterbalancing our burdens.

Moses himself, when his mind was freed from extraordinary perturbation, could not but acknowledge the loving kindness and compassion of the Lord, both to himself, and to Israel; the commission here given him was highly honorable to himself, as well as expressive of Jehovah's pity for his people: and though the execution of it was arduous, such assistance was afforded him, both *mediately* by the assistance of the seventy elders (verse 16, 17, 24) and *immediately* by the supply of the divine spirit, that Moses was enabled to discharge his office with comfort and credit; and having brought the chosen tribes to the borders of their promised inheritance, and enjoyed the sight of the good land from the top of mount Pisgah, he entered into eternal joy.

The same joy, my beloved brother, is set before us; the same grace is sufficient for us; let not the greatness of our work discourage us, nor the prospect of difficulties, similar to his, dismay us; but let us regard the language of the text as the commission given us by the divine Redeemer (who bought us, and our dear people, with a price angels cannot compute) saying

Carry this people in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land, which is secured to them by the oath of God.

As

As your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom, and patience of Jesus Christ, I invite you to join me in serious meditation, on this memorable day, wherein you have taken the over-sight of a church of Christ.

First. Upon the *nature of our charge*, as represented by this descriptive language.

Our charge is *real* and *divine*. We were neither of us constrained by human authority, nor engaged by human persuasion, to enter on the work of the gospel ministry: we entered upon it voluntarily. And the particular post you now occupy, was not allotted you, by any earthly superior, by any patron, presbytery, or prelate, but you willingly acceded to the free invitation of the Baptist Church in this city. We have both professed that it was in obedience to a divine call, we undertook to preach the gospel; having been inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit, who excited us, from love to Christ, and from compassion to perishing souls, to desire this good work. In this way, a necessity has been laid upon us, and *Woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel*. We know that the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal; and having received gifts, of whatever degree, from the head of the church, woe unto us if we hide our Lord's talent as in a napkin, and do not *occupy till he shall come*. To him must we give an account of our stewardship, who hath entrusted us with the mysteries of God; knowing that as every man hath received this gift, so must he minister the same unto others, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God. And as the same God, who called us to this work in general, hath, by the guidance of his Providence, allotted to us our particular stations, we cannot interpret the combined language of his word and providence, respecting the

people of our charge, as amounting to less than this, Carry them in thy bosom (as a nursing father beareth his sucking child) unto the promised land.

Our commission, my brother, is *extensive* and *particular*. Not like that of Moses indeed, comprehending the concerns of a nation, nor connected with any right to intermeddle with the secular affairs of our people : It is confined merely to their spiritual interests. But in that respect it extends not merely to the communicants, belonging to our respective churches, that have elected us to the pastoral office ; but to all who are connected with them, or to whom we can have access by their means ; to their children, their servants, their acquaintance whom they may invite to hear their ministers : yea, to all around us whom we can engage to attend to our ministrations. O may you imitate him, who acknowledged himself a debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise, and the unwise ; laboring to approve yourself unto God, as a workman who needeth not to be ashamed ; or like a good householder, bringing out of your treasury, things *new* and *old*. Let the inhabitants of Worcester, and of the adjacent villages, find that God has set you here as a watchman, to watch for souls. Let them who have long known the Lord, be convinced that you are diligently studying his word, to bring forth new stores of profitable truth ; and let the old fundamental and interesting doctrines, in which these are well established, be faithfully represented to those who have not yet received them.

The great essentials of religion, the doctrine of salvation by the blood of the LAMB, and by the renewing of the HOLY SPIRIT, are like daily bread, which must never be forgotten ; but the whole system of faith and duty must be brought more and more to light, if we would edify the
souls

souls of men. I persuade myself, brother, that you will neither affect unscriptural novelties, nor yet confine your whole ministry to four or five favorite points, to the neglect of all the truths in the Bible besides. But all you say, will, I trust, have an ultimate reference to our glorious Redeemer; to shew the need, the suitableness, the glory, the tendency of his great salvation. Him you must preach, as dwelling in his people's hearts, and being the hope of glory: like Paul, warning every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom; that you may present every one of your hearers perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end you must labor, as long as you can find an unbelieving sinner, or an imperfect saint, *striving, according to his working, who worketh in you mightily*. Every one of your auditors possesses a soul of inestimable worth, which nothing but the blood of Jesus could have ransomed from eternal burnings. Every one of them demands your pity, your prayer, and your earnest endeavors to subserve his salvation. The rich, who cannot enter into the kingdom of God, but with extreme difficulty; the poor, who must be so wretched in both worlds, if not made heirs of the kingdom; the aged, who stand on the brink of hell, and must fall in, if not very soon converted; the young, who may be so very useful, if called by times, and who are the chief objects of our hope for the continuance of the church, after we are silent in the dust: All the classes into which we can divide our congregations, demand our exertions; and how should it rouse us to think, every time we preach, that some of our hearers are, probably, hearing the *last* message we can deliver to them from God.

O how *interesting* and *important* is this charge! The charge of souls already exposed to eternal misery! All the evils which accursed war has inflicted, on them that have fallen in the bloody field, or whose mangled carcases have gorged

gorged the monsters of the deep; on those who have languished in hospitals, or have been scorched to death in their burning dwellings, within these few years past; all the *temporal* miseries of all the inhabitants of Poland, France, or Germany, &c. have endured, cannot equal the *eternal* misery of a single soul. Yet this misery inevitably threatens all who die in their sins. Into this gulph of woe our hearers must sink, if they are not soon brought to repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet you have room to hope that, through your instrumentality, many may not only be saved from so great a death, but be, through the righteousness of God our Savior, made heirs of eternal life. Thus shall you be accessory to their enjoyment of blessings *doubtly infinite*; even deliverance from eternal woe, and the enjoyment of an eternity of unspeakable bliss. O what an honor has our Divine Master conferred on every faithful minister. Of what importance is the office of a spiritual guide, to reclaim unto God those who had wandered far out of the way, and guide them into the path of righteousness and peace! Of how much consequence is it that we guide them on, in that truly *narrow* way which God has marked out for them in his word, and guard them against all bye-paths, whether they turn to the right hand, or to the left! What innumerable dangers surround them, and of how much depravity are they still the subjects! How then do they need our constant attention! If we, in any respect, mislead them, it will be awful, both for them, and for us: but if they arrive safely at the heavenly Jerusalem, with what transport shall we meet each other, before the throne!

Our charge must be *constant* and *abiding*. It is here beautifully compared to that of a nursing father; a character which would be well understood among the Israelites, in the time of their travels through the wilderness. Their
long

long fatiguing marches, must render it peculiarly needful, that the tenderer female should, in many instances at least, be eased off the burden of her sucking infant; and that the stronger parent should carry it in his bosom; nor would this task be needful merely for a few months, but for a very considerable period, till the child had acquired a degree of strength proportioned to the toils of the difficult journey. Moses, however, was called to a longer exercise of anxious care respecting the collective body of Israel, than the most weakly suckling could require, from the most robust, and affectionate father. And hence our duty resembles his. It will need to be continued, not merely for a few months, or years, but as long as our lives, and theirs who hear us, are protracted. We must not leave the work of God, in which we are engaged, while we are able to prosecute it; nor must we lightly abandon the particular situations, allotted us by Divine Providence. We hope for a succession of new converts: but such will need the sincere milk of the word, for their growth in grace; and their inexperience and weakness will render peculiar attention necessary. Nor must we leave off admonishing an individual, who still remains obstinate in his rebellion, as long as he will pay the smallest attention to our remonstrances: while the best saint, with whom we are connected, as long as he is on this side Jordan, will sometimes need our assistance; for he is still in an enemies land, and may suffer the severest loss, in some of his latest conflicts. Yea, if both we, and our people, are not always on the watch, some of them, in whom the change appeared most conspicuous, when they were first brought home to God, may, through that very circumstance, be the more in danger of temptations to carnal security. But the longest experience, and the liveliest exercise of grace in times past, will not warrant us, nor the christian himself, to relax our solicitude,

solicitude, that he may be kept from disgracing his profession, even toward the close of his pilgrimage.

I scarcely need to add, that the charge given us, will be found *difficult* and *laborious* in its execution. To deliver and guide Israel was an arduous undertaking, which Moses could never have accomplished, had he not been commissioned, and assisted, from on high. But he feared not the wrath of the King; nor fainted under the toils of the wilderness; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. And we need as great resolution as Moses: for though we are not, at this period, called to stand against opposition from the Kings of this world, we have to contend with the god of it, who is very unwilling to part with his slaves. And we need daily assistance to enable us to imitate the diligence, the faithfulness, the patience, and the meekness of Moses, in our intercourse with our very friends. How else shall we keep them from being discouraged because of the way; from being drawn aside after idols; or even from turning back, as it were, unto Egypt? How shall we direct them to the antitype of the brazen serpent? How shall we assist them to fight against that Amalek; with whom the Lord hath sworn that he will have war for ever, till he be utterly destroyed? How, in a word, shall we conduct them safely to the heavenly Canaan? You fully conceive, brother, the import of these figurative expressions; and are ready to say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* You know that God alone can accomplish them; but as he condescends to employ his ministers, in executing his gracious designs, and has given us the charge of his people, as he gave unto Moses the care of conducting ancient Israel, let us proceed to some further reflections,

Secondly. On the *principal requisites* to a due discharge of our important trust.

Certainly,

Certainly, to guide souls to heaven must require *knowledge* and *judgment*. It must require an acquaintance with the true character of the God of Israel, and a cordial sense of his glory; with the knowledge of his holy law, its wide extent, spirituality, equity and excellence. Thereby it is, that we must acquire that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to prove the necessity of salvation, by a great and gracious Redeemer. And we must be able to instruct sinners in the way of peace, whereby they may approach to a holy God, and live; in which he can be just, and yet be gracious to whom he pleases, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, without clearing the guilty; and, without injury to his righteousness, manifesting his pardoning mercy, to all those who have entered into covenant with him, by pleading that propitiatory sacrifice, which he himself provided, to take away sin. We must cultivate an extensive acquaintance with the whole revelation God has made of his will; and be able to direct the redeemed of the Lord, in all the ways of holiness and righteousness, in which they should walk before him, till they entered his promised rest. All these subjects should be understood in their harmonious connection: that the law may be used in subserviency to the gospel; and the gospel employed for practical purposes. But for this end, we need to pray, that the spirit of judgment may rest upon us, to make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, that we may teach our dear people the good knowledge of the Lord; that their love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and all judgment; that they may prove the things that differ, and approve the things which are excellent.

Wisdom and *prudence* are highly necessary for us, as well as knowledge and judgment; both to assist us in our addresses to our hearers, and to regulate our own example. It is of great importance that a minister should know the

due limits of his province, that he may avoid intermeddling with that which does not appertain to his office ; and may discharge his duty, respecting all that truly belongs to it, in the manner which is the most likely to be successful. It is, for instance, our bounden duty to bear testimony against all sin, and this must not be omitted, on account of our knowing that some of our friends are guilty ; but if we would be truly useful, we must forbear those personalities which would point out an individual to great part of the assembly ; and even in our private admonitions, we must be careful to make it appear that they are not angry reproaches, but reproofs dictated by love ; and then, if men will hold us as enemies for speaking the truth, in real good-will to their souls, we may leave it with our master, to support us under their resentments ; we must offend *any body* rather than HIM. But while we oppose sin in others, may we especially mortify it in ourselves ; and be more strict at home than any where : Abstaining from the appearance of evil ; concerned to order all our affairs with discretion, and to cut off occasion from those who seek an occasion against us. “ As there are many who are ready
 “ to make a minister an offender for a word, or the least
 “ inadvertent action, he needs prudence every where, and
 “ in every thing. Imprudence is one of the greatest ene-
 “ mies to the pastoral office : and, excepting a gracious
 “ heart, no qualification is more necessary, for a minister,
 “ than prudence *.”

Affiduity and diligence are very needful for the discharge of the ministerial calling. Not only should we be ready to preach the word, in season, and out of season ; but we must apply closely to study, and unite with it fervent prayer.

* SPRING's Sermon, at the ordination of THURSTON, in Somersworth. 1792.

Understanding is a well-spring of life to him that hath it; but this well is deep, and it is laborious work to draw up these living waters. Clearly to exhibit to our people the great truths of religion, and to point out their salutary tendency, to pacify the conscience, and purify the heart; keeping back nothing that is profitable; but defending the doctrines of the gospel against all opposers, and abusers of them, and guarding our hearers against error on either hand, is no trivial business, which may be performed without exertion or toil. Not only to produce in the pulpit things new and old, but continually to watch over them who are committed to our care, endeavoring, in truly pastoral visits, to water privately, what we had sown in public, requires our utmost diligence. And when the name of Christ is openly dishonored by his professed followers, his ministers must not decline the painful task of keeping up discipline in his church, admonishing offenders, and, if they cannot be reclaimed, impartially excluding such wicked persons from christian communion.

Fidelity and a sense of responsibility to our Lord, are indispensable qualifications of a minister of Jesus, and will carry him through unnumbered difficulties. Moses had this testimony, from God himself, that he was faithful, as a servant, in all his house: though the Son of God himself, who once appeared in a servile character, and as the apostle and high-priest of our profession, became obedient unto death, hath in all things the pre-eminence, and is justly accounted worthy of superior glory, in respect of his perfect fidelity, as he is infinitely superior to all the household of God in native dignity. *His* work was unspeakably more arduous than that of Moses, and executed with sublimer zeal, though with greater abasement and difficulty. But Moses, who was employed in settling that œconomy which was introductory to a better dispensation, was careful to do

nothing as of his own will, but in every punctilio to act agreeable to the orders he received from Jehovah. Even in the framing of the tabernacle, he was admonished of God: *See, said he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount.* And thus must we, my brother, be in all things faithful to him who has appointed us. As servants of the wisest, greatest, and best of masters, we must implicitly obey his will: or, as soldiers, who are accustomed to the strictest subordination, we must regard every command of the Captain of our Salvation; willing endure hardships, for his sake, and be so intent upon our holy warfare, as not to entangle ourselves with extraneous concerns; but must make it the whole business of our lives to please him, who hath chosen us to serve under his banner. God has placed us, as watchmen on the walls of Zion, and enjoined that we should watch for souls, as those who must give an account how we perform that duty. I know that you consider the xxxiii of Ezekiel as of divine authority, and are well aware, that the decrees of God would no more excuse our neglect of the spiritual interests of our people, than they would excuse the negligence of one, who was appointed to keep watch in a city, by night; or, who was placed as sentinel to alarm an army, in case of the enemies approach: but our crime would be as much more heinous, as our charge is of greater importance. O may we both, on our dying beds, be found *pure from the blood of souls*; and be able to attest, that *having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, so speak we in Christ; by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience.*

With these qualifications we must connect *tenderness and affection.* This idea, especially, is beautifully exhibited in the text. *Carry them, in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth*

heareth the sucking child, &c. Let us endeavor to give its full force to this pathetic allusion. Picture to yourself a case, which must have repeatedly occurred, in the course of the forty years Moses spent with his people in the wilderness. An Israelite, we will suppose, soon after he first became a father, is bereaved of the delight of his eyes, while an only pledge of conjugal affection remains, alternately to increase and assuage his grief. How weighty, but how interesting would he feel that charge, which yet he would not for all the world decline or transfer! A neighbor's wife might he hire to suckle it; but he himself would also feed it, with the freshest manna, and, as much as possible, take the care of it himself. However long and tedious his march by day, parental affection would make the burden of a motherless babe, not only light, but pleasant: and, at night, he would lay it to rest in his own bosom. When God visited the sins of Israel with fiery serpents, which bit them, so that much of the people died; how would this nursing father feel his anxiety increased! His only son would scarce ever be off his knee, in the tent; never out of his bosom on their journeys: and if, in spite of all his precautions, a serpent had bitten his darling child, its deadly poison was spreading rapidly through his veins, he began to be convulsed, and nothing but the remedy prescribed by the merciful Jehovah, could save him from the agonies of death; how would the father run, and hold him up in his arms, gently forcing open his closing eyes, to view the brazen serpent? With what gratitude would his bosom glow, when he perceived his infant instantly revive? How would he, after this recovery, pursue his course with renewed vigor; and though he knew himself doomed to fall in the wilderness, he would fondly anticipate his offspring's future possession of the promised land; and that hope would counterbalance all his present affliction and toil. O my brother, this is the pattern we are taught, by the
text,

text, to place before us. With such feelings as these, may we direct the eyes of our dear people to a crucified Savior: with such feelings as these, may we bear them in our bosoms, to the confines of glory! We find Paul, in the New Testament, applying like similitudes, to represent the affection, which he, and his brethren, felt for their converts. He tells the Thessalonians, *We were gentle among you, even as a NURSE cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. Ye know, how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a FATHER his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.* Surely ministers have special reason to take to themselves the charge given to the churches, *Let all your things be done in love.* Genuine benevolence should evidently diffuse itself, through all our sermons, our prayers, our warnings, our reproofs, our whole conversation and conduct. It was a lovely character, which, I was long ago informed, was given by a deistical physician, of the late Dr. Gillies, of Glasgow: he said, "He believed that John Gillies would be glad to "carry all mankind, in his bosom, to the kingdom of heaven." May the enemies of the gospel never find any thing worse to say of you, my brother!

Patience and meekness will naturally flow from this sincere affection: and the patience and meekness of christian ministers will be often tried. Moses, the meekest of all men, had enough to do, to bear with the frowardness of Israel. We have seen an end of all human perfection, and this context shews us his patience nearly worn out: I fear, brother, ours would be found far more defective, in much smaller trials. But what parent would abandon his peevish child in a waste howling wilderness? What minister

ter of Jesus shall dare to give up his office, because he meets with ingratitude, and unmerited reproach; after all his anxieties and labors for his peoples welfare? Let us count the cost, brother, and go no further on, in our work, if our master's smiles will not make us amends for our people's frowns. They who are employed under the physician of souls, must expect delirious patients to give many provocations to their tenderest friends. We must, therefore, not be easily moved to resentment, by unkindness and injuries; but instead of being overcome of evil, must labor to overcome evil with good. Let us remember our Lord's loving kindness to us; what patience and long-suffering he has displayed, ever since we entered his service; and, if he hath kept us in his family, and now called us to bear an honorable office in his church, verily, we must acknowledge, it is his *gentleness hath made us great.*

Self-denial and *resolution* are graces we shall be daily called to exercise; and without them, it will be impossible to continue steadfast in the work of the Lord. In the strength of grace, we must be determined not to forsake the flocks, of which the Holy Spirit has made us overseers, in the time of danger: that is the time when the hireling fleeth, but it is our best opportunity to shew our love to the Lord, and to his people. Then it is, that like David, we must venture our lives for the sheep; or rather, must shew that we have the very mind of his Son and Lord, who bought both us, and them, with his precious blood. If we are duly impressed with the glory of his disinterested love, who *laid down his life for us*, it will not appear an extravagant inference, of the beloved John, that *we ought to be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Whether providence shall literally call us to this duty, or not, may we shew that we have the temper from which it would assuredly spring: habitually feeling the force of that observation,

observation, *For even Christ pleased not himself.* He listened not to the temptation of shunning the cross, even though it came from an apostle; but replied, *Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men:* And immediately he began to inculcate the absolute necessity of self-denial, and bearing the cross, upon all his disciples. Let us look, therefore, to him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, sustaining the cross, and despising the shame, for the sake of our salvation; and may his love constrain us to spend, and be spent, if we may but subserve the interest of immortal souls, and bear them, as in our bosoms, to the paradise of God.

Lastly, *Faith and confidence in God* will be found needful for us, throughout the whole of our pilgrimage; that we may hold on our way, and finish our own course with joy; and also fulfil our duty, as spiritual guides, and nursing fathers, to others. Often has the Lord tried his ministers with outward straits, but never has he deserted them. Many are their inward conflicts, but grace shall make them more than conquerors. Both their external trials, and their spiritual exercises, are commonly means of their acquiring the tongue of the learned, that they may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, and comfort those who are cast down, with the consolations wherewith they themselves are comforted by God. Thus are they enabled to attest, from experience, that he can furnish a table in the wilderness, and open streams in the desert. They can set their seals to the truth of his promises, and encourage others to cast their care upon him, who careth so affectionately for them. And as to all the dangers and difficulties of their ministerial work, the Lord, by the supply of his spirit, communicates wisdom and grace; that they may make a successful stand against the enemies of his truth;

truth; and feed and guide his people. We cannot ensure the fruit of our labors, but he can do it infallibly; and he will accept, and reward, those whom he makes faithful, whether their success equal their expectations, or not.

Let us, finally reflect,

Thirdly. On the MOTIVES and ENCOURAGEMENTS, which should induce us to persevere in our work, notwithstanding the difficulties which may attend it.

Consider, my dear brother, *whose people they are*, that are committed to your affectionate regard: They are a people *peculiarly the Lord's*. Moses, when his patience was nearly exhausted, said, Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them that thou should'st say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom? &c. But Moses acted more in character, as a man of God, at a former period, when their being God's people was a weightier consideration with him, than if he himself had been their immediate father. Exod. xxxii. 7—14. Scarcely ever did mere man shew such disinterested benevolence, as he then exemplified. O that we may thus care for our dear people, as being God's people, whom he hath *formed*, and is still forming, *for himself, that they may shew forth his praise*: while we hope that he who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, will gather others to himself, besides those whom he hath already gathered; and that, by our instrumentality, he will enlarge the frontiers of his visible kingdom, and go on to accomplish the number of his chosen.

The consideration, *whence God had brought this people*, had great weight with Moses, at the time to which I have just referred: and so it should with us. He has brought out his spiritual Israel, from worse bondage than Israel after the flesh had felt in Egypt; and has herein given a super-

rior display of his great goodness, and the efficacy of his mighty arm. And, I trust, you will soon find some among your own congregation, of whom it may be truly said, that you were the honored instrument of their happy deliverance from the yoke of their tyrannic lord. This surely will enhance your earnest solicitude, that they may be safely conducted to the Canaan above.

Reflect, that God's peculiar people, were not only redeemed by *power* from the yoke of Satan, as Israel was redeemed from Pharoah's cruel dominion; but have been also redeemed, from deserved destruction by an invaluable *price*. God had *done* great things for those whom he entrusted to Moses, but now, God incarnate has *suffered* greater things, for those whom he has committed to you. He who has given you charge concerning them, bought both them, and you, with his own blood. Were either of us, brother, to neglect the church of God, how must it awaken the displeasure of our blessed Lord! Might he not ask us, "Did I die for these precious souls, and will you refuse to labor for them? Did I suffer so much for them, and are you unwilling to suffer a little for their sakes? Did I bear the curse, in their stead; and will not you endure a light cross, for their benefit?"

Remember, brother, *that your interest is connected with theirs*. The more they thrive in vital godliness, the more they will pray for you, sympathize with you, and help you. Those subjects, which would be most edifying, and that manner of treating them, which would be most interesting to them, will tend most to your personal edification. If they are fed with chaff, leanness awaits your own soul; but if you enter truly into the spirit of the gospel, you are most likely to do them essential service. Then you, and they, shall at once experience divine light, irradiating your minds;

minds; the peace of God, which passes understanding, pacifying your consciences, and his love sweetly constraining you to new obedience.

Let us consider seriously, that *if* our hearts are not constantly set upon our people's welfare, *our work* is likely to become a *snare to ourselves*. Being officially conversant with the things of God, from day to day, they will either make a *deeper* impression on us, than on others, or they will affect us so much the *less*; and we shall become the more indifferent towards them, through their being so habitually taken into our lips: for to us, as well as to our hearers, the word will be either a savor of life, or of death. Besides, as our researches lead us, more than private christians, to attend to theological controversies, and to notice the *objections* that are urged against the truth; if we are not continually *making use* of the truth, we shall be more likely than most others, to be turned aside from it. Also, if we are not *profitable* to our hearers, *we* shall most probably prove *prejudicial* to *them*: It is next to impossible that a minister should do, neither good, nor harm. But how awful would it be for us, to mislead the souls of men, and instead of alluring them to Christ, to draw them off from his genuine gospel, or prejudice them against it! Besides, if we look not well to our own hearts, and are not truly concerned for our people's edification, *they* will, in various respects, do *us* harm; and it may go ill with us, for their sakes. If we aim not heartily at making them more spiritually minded, they will make us more earthly minded. If we pluck them not out of the net, they will draw us into a snare. It was sad for Moses, through his impatience, in the day of provocation, to be himself excluded from the earthly Canaan, after he had led a whole nation to its borders: but how much more awful would it be, to be excluded the heavenly Canaan, after being em-

ployed to shew others the way to it? While I rejoice in the fullest persuasion of your sincerity, I need make no excuse for introducing this thought, since we both recollect, that an apostle counted it expedient, to cultivate a godly jealousy, lest after preaching unto others, he himself should be a cast-away.

Let the *dangers of the wilderness*, to which we, and our people are still exposed, awaken our solicitude for their safety. Here a roaring lion prowleth about, seeking whom he may devour; may we resist him stedfast in the faith, and encourage our people so to do. This is a land of darkness, like the shadow of death; let us urge them closely to follow the pillar of fire, that goeth before them, to give them light in their pilgrimage. It is a land of drought, and of barrenness; but God, by his ministers, furnishes his people with heavenly manna, and with water from Christ the true rock. They are travelling through a land infested with fiery serpents; we need to direct them to look, again and again, to him who was typified by that serpent of brass, which Moses lifted up in the wilderness. Enemies will harass them all the way, often making open opposition, and at other times more dangerously vexing them by their wiles; we must lift up our hands for them to God, as Moses did during the battle with Amalek, and encourage them to trust in the Captain of the Lord's hosts, and to take to them the whole armor of God. Surely they need a faithful, skilful, compassionate guide, who shall carry them in his bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, till they enjoy the inheritance given them, by the promise, and oath of Jehovah.

Sink not under discouragement, nor say, as Moses once did, *O my Lord, send, by the hand of him by whom thou wilt send.* For you have been called to an office the noblest, the most important, the most benevolent, that can be entrusted
to

to man. God has commissioned you, not to execute his wrath, but to subserve the glorious purposes of his grace. Indeed he seldom employs those whom he means to save, in inflicting vengeance on others. *Once* he commissioned Joshua indeed, to expel the idolatrous, and barbarous nations of Canaan, whose iniquity was fully ripe. But he, *generally* employs those as instruments of vengeance to destroy mens bodies; whom he means also to destroy; and though they have subserved his righteous purposes, yet as they aimed at a very different end from his, they have afterwards been punished for their conduct (Isa. x. 5—13, Hos. i. 4): but on the other hand, he commonly employs those as instruments of mercy, to save mens souls, whom he intends to be themselves partakers of his great salvation. You, my brother, are not called to kill mens bodies, but to save their souls; not to burn down their dwellings, but to prevent their dwelling with everlasting burnings. The work of a gospel minister is the nearest akin to the work of Jesus Christ of any work in the world. He has set us an example the most perfect, to direct us in the discharge of it; though it was wisely ordered that he had no great success in his ministry, to teach us that he had a still higher end in coming into the world. He preached the gospel to teach *us* how to preach it; but he died to *purge away our sins*, which was work none could do but himself. We, indeed, separate from him, can do nothing; but he has said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. Paul himself had no more sufficiency of his own, than you, or I. And it was for the sake of ordinary ministers, as much as of the apostles, that Jesus Christ declared, *Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world*. You have apostolic authority to apply to yourself, and to every true believer, the promise once made to Joshua, *I will never leave nor forsake thee*. Therefore, my beloved brother, *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*: and when you have the deepest conviction

conviction of your own insufficiency, remember that *his* strength is displayed, to the most perfect advantage in *our* weakness. To encourage your expectations, let me remind you, that the power of Jehovah, instead of being *exhausted*, in the days of old, was far from being all *exerted*; he has taught us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, to hope for more glorious displays of all-conquering grace, than ever the jewish, or even the primitive christian world beheld. Let then the *watchmen* of Zion, who make mention of the name of Jehovah, *not keep silence*; nor let him rest in *silence*, till he *establish Jerusalem, and make her a praise in the earth*. The husband and redeemer of the church, shall soon be called the God of the whole earth. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

To conclude: I would remind you that *you shall share the heavenly inheritance*, with those whose guide and conductor you are now appointed. The great and precious promises of the gospel, which are the result of the divine counsel, and are confirmed by the oath of God, ensure an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, to all true believers. The land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands, while the blessing of the Lord was upon it, was only a shadow of that perfect felicity that awaits all the redeemed. And, unlike the children of Israel, your toils shall end as soon as you enter the promised land; Death is the last enemy, and death itself is conquered, and shall be swallowed up in victory. In that day, when the greater part of the mighty potentates of the earth, shall tremble at the recollection of all their boasted victories, and of the myriads they had sacrificed to Abaddon; when they shall cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, in the day that he maketh inquisition for blood; then you, my brother, I trust, like the other
faithful

faithful ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, shall head a goodly company, whom you had directed to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness: and you shall say, with humble grateful transport, "Behold, Lord, here am I, and here are the children thou hast given me, whom I bore in my bosom, as a nursing father his sucking child, in the wilderness; through thy grace, are we now arrived at the inheritance thou hast promised and prepared." With them, you shall enter into the joy of the Lord, and surely the eternal happiness of every individual, to whose conversion and salvation your ministry was rendered subservient, will make a sensible and everlasting addition to your own.

May all these motives, and many more which the word of God exhibits to our view, be deeply impressed on your heart, and mine! And may the peculiar happiness you enjoy, in the cordial friendship, and christian harmony, which subsists between you, and our honored brother, the pastor of the church which assembles statedly within these walls, and between his people, and those that are committed to your care, never suffer the least interruption; but may it prove an additional excitement, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. This union, so natural an effect of divine grace, though seldom seen, through the influence of deplorable infirmity, affords peculiar pleasure to all the friends of religion, who are here from a distance; and excites to unite in prayer, that the ministers and people of both congregations, continuing to pursue the noblest of all designs, the glory of God, and the salvation of the souls of men, a large harvest of converts may be gathered in unto God from this neighborhood, and though, at times, you may sow in tears, may you both at last reap with joy unspeakable. Amen.

A SERMON,

A SERMON,

—
 &c.
 —

—
 EPH. IV. 11.
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HE GAVE SOME—PASTORS AND TEACHERS.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

ALTHOUGH I partake of your pleasure in this public recognition of the interesting relation which you have formed with our dear brother; yet, I could have wished that the duties which now devolve on you, were to be stated and enforced by some more experienced minister, whose better knowledge would have furnished you with more suitable instruction, and whose superior years would have attached a greater weight to his advice; but since you have requested me to undertake this part of the solemn service of the day, I will endeavor, with affectionate fidelity, to discharge it; hoping, that the Head of the Church may put some treasure into the earthen vessel, and enrich and comfort us all with his presence.

The words of my text, with the preceding verses, are designed to *illustrate*, to *connect*, and to *confirm* some predictions in the Old Testament.

In the sixty-eighth psalm, the prophet having in view some illustrious conqueror, thus celebrates his triumphs: v. 18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men." This prophecy

prophecy the apostle *illustrates*, by teaching, that the triumphant language of the psalmist designates the *ascension of Jesus Christ*, when "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them by his cross, and took his seat at the right hand of God."

In the third chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy, the Lord comforted his people, by promising to "give them pastors according to his heart, who should feed them with knowledge and understanding." Now Paul *connects* prophecy, by declaring, that the gifts which the Psalmist says the Messiah received for men, were the same as the pastors and teachers, which, by Jeremiah, were promised to the church; and he *confirms* the joint prediction, by appealing to manifest and multiplied proofs of its accomplishment, in the persons of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers," which, at that very time, were employed for the edification of the disciples of Christ.

Although apostles and prophets, in the strict sense of the terms, are no longer upon earth, because the peculiar and miraculous powers with which they were invested are no longer necessary in the church; yet, such gifts as are adapted to its circumstances are not withheld; and you, my brethren, are put in possession of one to-day—a pastor, to feed you with knowledge and understanding. You have requested me to introduce, as it were, your minister among you: how can I better fulfil your desire, than by presenting him to you as *the gift of Christ*; and earnestly recommending you, as such, to receive him now; and, as such, invariably to consider him in future.

Ministers of Christ, my brethren, like most other blessings, are over-valued by some, and held in too little esteem by others: happy will it be, if you are enabled to find out,

and preserve, the medium between those extremes; and, happy shall I account myself, if I am enabled to assist you, in regulating your regards for the servant of God, whom you have freely chosen for your pastor.

The passage I have selected, places your minister exactly in that point of view, in which you cannot behold him without respect, at the same time that it secures you from esteeming the servant above his Lord: it teaches you to regard him as *a gift*; but, at the same time, a gift not to be despised; for, he is the gift of CHRIST. "Unto every one of us," saith the apostle, in the preceding verses, "is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ—he gave gifts unto men;" and among other of his gracious bestowments, "he gave some—pastors and teachers."

From various remarks, which are suggested by the consideration of ministers being the gifts of Christ, let us select a few that may be suitable to the present occasion.

First. It suggests THE CARE WHICH THE BLESSED REDEEMER EXERCISES OVER HIS CHURCH UPON EARTH.

When our Lord gave his last instructions to his apostles, he encouraged them and their successors to obedience, by promising to be with them alway, even to the end of time. He soon began to fulfil this promise, when on the day of Pentecost he so remarkably "endued them with power from on high," and attended their ministry with such wonderful efficacy, that the very persons who were hardened under the groans of the Master, now melt under the words of his servants, and joyfully become the disciples of him whom they had crucified.

Powerful

Powerful opposition from the world, followed the early prosperity of the church: "The kings of the earth and
 "the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and
 "against his anointed; but, he that sitteth in the heavens
 "laughed them to scorn; the Lord had them in derision—
 "He spoke to them in his wrath, in his sore displeasure
 "he vexed them;" and triumphing over their subtilty and
 power, he saith, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy
 "hill of Zion." Persecuted and despised as it was, yet
 "the truth ran and was glorified"—Neither the influence
 of princes, the terror of armies, the pride of learning, the
 ignorance of the barbarian, the prejudices of the Jew;
 nor the threatening nor the torment of scourges, racks, or
 fires, could prevent its prevalence; and, though the in-
 struments employed in its propagation were, for the most
 part, destitute of the ornaments of science, or the support
 of civil power; yet, "mightily grew the word of the
 "Lord, and prevailed."

Many indeed of the faithful ministers of Jesus suffered
 in his service, and sealed the truth they had propagated
 with their blood: The church was bereaved of those pre-
 cious gifts of Christ, whilst some of its members were
 martyred, with their pastors, and others lived to bewail
 their loss; but, whilst the enemy was thus impoverishing
 the city of God, Jesus was "leading captivity captive;"
 and, with the spoils he took from the foe, he still enriched
 and adorned Jerusalem. Those who erewhile were
 "breathing out threatening and slaughter" against the men
 who called on the Savior's name, were subdued by the
 power of his grace, and became "preachers of the faith
 "they had once destroyed." If the Jews stone STEPHEN,
the deacon, the church shall have PAUL, *the apostle*,
 in his room—if the hearers of the gospel be driven

from Jerusalem, they shall "preach it at Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch."

The more persecution prevailed, the more did it call forth the powers and the graces of the faithful: the weak became strong—the timid, bold—the indolent, active—zeal warmed the heart and inspired the tongue—fresh pastors and teachers were still raised up, and their labors were attended with great success; for, "the Lord added daily "unto the church such as should be saved."

The same process has more or less been carrying on ever since; and, whether the pastors of Christ's flock have been removed by means of violence, or by a natural death, their places have again been occupied; and, in many instances, by those who have excelled their predecessors in piety, wisdom, and success.

When the Hebrew christians mourned over their deceased teachers, how did the apostle comfort their hearts, but by reminding them, that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!*" and the history of nearly eighteen centuries, gives stability to this ground of consolation. Behold a new evidence of it to-day! Behold another proof that our Lord remembers his church, "now "he is in his kingdom!" and may the recollection of this day enliven your hope, my brethren, and establish your confidence, should you live to attend your present pastor to the tomb! Though Christ has presented you with a valuable gift, you must not forget that it is a mortal one—a vessel, which, though it contain a heavenly treasure, is composed of earthly materials, and may soon be broken.

We should never form an earthly connexion without reflecting on the certainty of its dissolution—The husband
and

and the wife, the parent and the child, dear and soft as those relations are, must think of parting; and *you*, my brethren, must part with your minister. Should such an event be occasioned by any improper behavior on your part, the Lord may correct you for your sin, by withholding a blessing you abuse; but should your pastor be taken away by the hand of God, comfort yourselves with the thought, that *ministers are the gifts of CHRIST*—that *he* can easily replace your loss—and that his continued care over his church, lays a ground of expectation that it will be so.

Secondly. The consideration that ministers are the gifts of Christ, suggests THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER WHICH A PEOPLE WHO ARE INDULGED WITH A FAITHFUL PASTOR ARE LAID TO PECULIAR GRATITUDE.

Every good thing we enjoy cometh from above, and therefore demands our thankfulness; but singular blessings demand singular acknowledgments; and, to those who know how to value it aright, there are few gifts to be more highly prized than a worthy minister. The difficulty which you, my brethren, have found in replacing your late pastor, must have convinced you that a suitable successor is no common favor. A man of piety, prudence, zeal, and other ministerial gifts, is a scarce commodity, which no human labor can produce, nor wealth procure; and which, if obtained, can be only enjoyed as the *gift of Christ*.

Above five years you have been seeking, and, I presume, praying for a spiritual guide; your prayers are now answered; many churches in the same situation have been waiting and praying for a similar blessing; our brother might have been given to them instead of you; consider yourselves as peculiarly favored, and be peculiarly grateful.

Thirdly.

Thirdly. IF MINISTERS ARE THE GIFTS OF CHRIST, THEY OUGHT TO BE HIGHLY ESTEEMED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

True friendship prizes a gift more for the giver's sake, than for its intrinsic value; and, though I would not suggest that Ministers have a less claim on the affections and respect of a people than other good men; yet, it is as the *gifts of Christ*, that they demand *peculiar regard*. As long as they conduct themselves in a manner worthy the exalted office they sustain, so long their Master saith unto them, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me:" and the becoming or unbecoming conduct of their people to them, Christ considers as to himself, and will say respecting both the one and the other, at last, "Inasmuch as ye did it "unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it "unto me."

Possess with this idea of your minister, you will be always disposed to view his person and his ministry in the most favorable light; and should you perceive an imperfection in your pastor (for to absolute perfection what modern pastor can pretend, when an apostle disclaimed it?) you will either bury it in his virtues, or cover it with the mantle of your own affections.

As the gift of Christ to *you*, your minister stands in a relation interesting and intimate—he is become as it were your property; but this, so far from allowing you to treat him with severity or neglect, is designed to endear him to you the more; for no man is supposed to "hate his own flesh, but on the contrary to nourish and cherish it, even "as the Lord the church." Indeed, when a man devotes his time, with his bodily and mental powers for a peoples good, equity to *him*, requires the return of affection and respect;

respect; but how much more compulsory is the demand, when his person, his graces, and his ministerial endowments, are considered as *the gift of CHRIST!*

Fourthly. IF MINISTERS ARE THE GIFTS OF CHRIST; IT IS OF IMPORTANCE THAT THEY SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THEY WERE BESTOWED. This is the last observation I shall make on the sentiment of the text, and to this I wish more amply to engage your attention.

None of God's gifts are bestowed without design—the falling shower, and the clear shining of the sun after rain, the wintry frosts and the summer heats, have their respective uses; nor can you suppose that the great Head of the Church hath called our brother by his grace, put him into the ministry, and given him to you as a pastor, without having in view some important end. It will now be your wisdom, as it is your duty, to consider seriously what that end is, and to be practically concerned to have it answered.

Plainly is this design unfolded in the words following the text, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” that is, not for your increase in numbers only, but also for your improvement in wisdom and goodness. Now *your duties*, my brethren, are consequent on your pastors: if he be a teacher, you must be learners; if he have a building to erect, you must be fellow laborers; and, unless you be wanting in the duties of your stations, you may be assured that the divine blessing will not be withheld: and,

1. If you would have the design of the pastoral relation answered, you must be *much in prayer* for your minister: His work is great, and the necessary qualifications
for

for the discharge of it, are neither unimportant nor few. It requires much wisdom to understand the scriptures—much fortitude to oppose the errors, the indifference, and the impurities of the times—much zeal to labor extensively and habitually for Christ and souls—much prudence to advise and act in difficult cases, and much personal religion to impart a favor of Christ to all his conversation, his discourses, and his prayers.

Here then is scope for your petitions; the furniture of a christian minister must come from above, and from thence it must be sought. “Brethren, *pray for us*,” said the apostle of the Gentiles—Brethren, *pray for us*, *we* also say: Men of like passions with yourselves—exposed to temptation from numerous quarters—as prone naturally to depart from God as you—liable to stupidity, carnality, and vanity—O, if you have any desire to see us holy, spiritual, active, honorable—*pray for us*.

You are not unacquainted, brethren, with the difficulties which lie in the way of our *success*. The labor of the Carthaginian general is not to be compared with ours! What are the stony Alps to a *stony heart*! or what the Roman legions to the powers of darkness—“to spiritual wickedness in high places!” Not merely to inform the judgments—to excite the passions—to conquer the prejudices of education, and to reform the manners of men; are before us—a more arduous task presents itself. My brethren, *our point* is not gained without *a change of heart*! a renovation of the whole soul! a conversion from the power of Satan unto God! But who is sufficient for these things? Can *human* energy effect them? Nay, my brethren, we are compelled to own that “we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves—all our sufficiency is of God.” Were all the moral virtues, and supernatural endowments, which have ever adorned the faint,

saint, or distinguished the apostle, concentrated in one christian pastor, neither will believers be improved, nor sinners converted, without the presence, the power, and the grace of Christ ! In vain we enter the pulpit—in vain we persuade—we exhort—we beseech—we reprove—we warn—or we invite ;—the word will never come with a saving power, unless it “ come in the Holy Ghost.” A faithful address to a guilty conscience may make a Roman governor tremble ; and, “ the manifestation of the truth,” may “ *almost* persuade a jewish monarch to become a “ christian ;” but to bring a sinner from “ darkness to light “ —to translate him from the kingdom of Satan, into the “ kingdom of God’s dear Son” —to constitute those who were “ aliens from Israel, without hope and without God “ in the world, fellow citizens with the saints and of the “ household of God,” is a work, which it would be presumption for an archangel to undertake ; and can only be accomplished by him with whom “ nothing is impossible.” Our only encouragement to labor, and our only hope of success, arise from the promise of God, and as a mean of enjoying it, the prayers of our people.—My dear brethren, you had better dispose of your pastor to some other church, unless you have a heart to pray for him.

2. If you would answer the end of such a gift, *make your minister’s work as easy to him as you can.* I do not mean by abridging the duties of his office, but by rendering him as easy, both in preparing for them, and engaging in them, as you are able. In proportion as his heart is in the work of God, so may that work be expected to prosper in his hand : it must be your care to prevent or remove, as much as possible, whatever might divert his mind from the immediate concerns of that relation in which he now stands to you ; that, as the apostle advises Timothy, he may “ give himself wholly to them,” or literally

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ally *be in them*: For this purpose, two things especially demand your concern.

(1.) That such provision be made for his support as may free his mind from all anxieties respecting his domestic affairs. For a minister to owe a bill which he cannot discharge, or to want a meal which he cannot obtain, is enough to turn his dwelling into a prison, and will sooner or later enervate his mind too much for studious application at home, or vigorous efforts abroad.

The duty of ministerial support, is enforced in the scriptures with energetic plainness. "Do ye not know," saith the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14, "that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? And they who wait at the altar are partakers of the altar? Even so HATH THE LORD ORDAINED, that *they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel;*" and verse 11, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

Such language as this, convinces our judgments, whilst it binds our conscience:—it is the language, not merely of authority; but of justice; and, whilst it forbids our disobedience, it compels us to acknowledge, that to obey, is our *reasonable* service; especially when we consider, that had the man, who consecrates himself to the good of this or that people, employed only the same powers in a mechanical or commercial line, he might have been as much their superior in opulence, as he is now in theology.

It ill becomes a member of a christian society, to urge, as an apology for the scanty pittance of a pastor, that he consented to receive such a stipend, when first he settled with his people:—Perhaps he did, and it might be enough

enough for his comfortable support *then*, though it may be that both *his family* and the *expence of living*, have been *doubled since*. — Where such men rule the affairs of a church, it is a comfort to reflect, that “God takes care for oxen.”

You, my brethren, know what is necessary to a minister's comfortable and respectable support, in this city; and will take care to keep your minister free from any pecuniary embarrassments.

(2.) You should be careful not only to allow your minister an adequate support, but must also, as far as possible, withhold yourselves from any intrusions on his *time*.

Nothing, next to the honor of Christ, and the interest of souls, is so dear to a studious pastor, as *time*; and a minister who thinks lightly of its value, betrays an ignorance and indolence, which, if indulged, will eventually debase both his character and labors.

A studious habit, as you have heard to-day, is essential to a stated minister. A lively imagination may serve an itinerant; but when a man becomes stationary, and preaches three or four times a week to the same people, unless he be industrious in furnishing his mind, his services will soon become insipid, void of solidity, fraught with tautology, and unfit for edification. And what is the result? Why, the thoughtful hearers must either abide with dissatisfaction, or in grief retire; whilst the ignorant are kept in their ignorance, and remain babes, when, under a judicious ministry, they might have become “fathers in Christ.”

Am I not now speaking to your pastor? No, my brethren, he has had better advice than I can give him. I speak

to

to you. I want to convince you that, for *your own sakes*, you should promote a studious habit in your minister: allow him every inch of time he wants: neither call upon him, nor expect him to call upon you for no better purpose than to gossip; especially let his *mornings* and his *Saturdays* be sacred—it is little short of cruelty to interrupt him then. As you love him, so, no doubt, you will feel a pleasure in his company; but let him choose his own times for seeing you; and do not accuse him of criminal negligence, if his visits are less frequent than you expect: Perhaps at the very moment of your disappointment, he was studying something against the Lord's-day for your case—perhaps at the moment that you are censuring him for his neglect, he is wrestling with God for you in his closet!

If a pastor devote those hours to the theatre, the card-table, or the race-ground, which ought to be given to his people, God forbid I should become his apologist; but to apologize for a studious minister, is always just, and often necessary; such an one, and such only, will answer to the character of the predicted pastor, who should “feed his flock with knowledge and understanding”—the pastor “after God’s own heart.”

(3.) If you would improve the gift of a pastor, you must *duly attend upon the sacred ordinances that he administers*. Without this, your profiting will be hardly possible. *Irregular attendance* will not only prevent your own improvement; but prove a pernicious example to others, and greatly discourage your minister. Painful indeed! when a man has been laboring a week to get food for the souls of his people, to see them turn their backs upon it when it is set before them; and, in effect, pronounce it unworthy their acceptance.

Nor should you only avoid irregular, but *late* attendance also—a practice as disgraceful to those who are found in it,

as

as it is disturbing to the congregation on which they so unseasonably intrude themselves; and insulting to their Maker, on whose worship they set so little value, and whose authority they treat with so little reverence. The devotees of the world might, if these dilatory attendants on sacred ordinances were not lost to shame, put them to the blush. Look into places of amusement, my brethren, and long before the *bagatelles* of the evening begin to be exhibited, you will see the seats occupied, and the spectators waiting. O my God! how few, do the ministers of the sanctuary find thus waiting for thee! Say, my brethren, is it seemly that the God of this world should glory over the God of heaven; and say, ‘my worshippers, are more faithful than thine!’ and will you assist his triumphs?

With a few, a very few exceptions, I will venture to say, that *no just apology can be made for this indecent practice.* Have you families that require your attendance? Rise but a quarter of an hour sooner, and you will no longer find an inconvenience there. The excuses that are derived from *food or dress*, are so inconsistent with *sincere religion*, that to suppose them in a christian society would be absurd: the man who can neglect the honor of his God, and the interests of his soul, to gratify, either the interior or the exterior of his body, wants something more than argument to “turn him from idolatry, to serve the “living and true God.”

Farther, public ordinances will be followed with little profit, unless you *seriously* attend to *ministerial instruction*, and *devoutly* engage in *divine worship.*

How unseemly, during the seasons of prayer or praise, to behold people staring about them with vacant countenances, which betray the indevotion of their hearts!

Brethren,

Brethren, I intreat that this may not be the case with you : nor should you merely *attend to* the devotional parts of public service, but *unite in* them. This is not the time for the exercise of a critical taste ; nor is the intercourse of a rebel with his God, to be judged by the rules of ancient or modern oratory. Forget not, my brethren, that such only worship God acceptably, who “ worship him in spirit and “ in truth.”

And, how unseemly for people to be gazing upon the congregation, whispering, smiling, or sleeping, when the messages of salvation are delivered ! Is it thus that criminals receive the news of pardon ? Is it thus that subjects receive the mandates of their prince ? Is it thus that christians hear the gospel of the Savior ? Never, I sincerely trust, will your pastor witness such indecencies in you.

4. You cannot improve the gift of a pastor, unless you *cordially embrace the truth he delivers, and yield to the just reproofs he may administer, and the scriptural precepts he may enforce.*

Satisfied, as you have this day publicly professed to be with his ministry, it is a warrantable presumption that you consider what he delivers as evangelic truth : but ministerial wisdom and fidelity, require much variety in the mode of representing and enforcing it. In a congregation of any size, the circumstances of the hearers will greatly vary. One may be living in habits of iniquity, whilst he is carelessly hastening to everlasting burnings—another may be distressed under recent awakenings—a third may want instruction about coming to Christ—a fourth may be struggling with temptation—a fifth, burdened with heavy affliction—a sixth may be rejoicing in the God of his salvation—a seventh may have defiled his garments, and by some
awful

awful crime, have brought a reproach on the religion he professed. Now, amidst this variety, is it possible for a minister, who is "to give to every man his portion of meat in due season," to be always insisting upon one topic, or aiming at one character only? And would it not be highly unreasonable for an individual to complain, and say, 'My minister has neglected me to-day!' Give your minister credit for this, that, as he has had the most experience, so he must be the best judge of what is seasonable; and rather water his ministry with your prayers, than blacken it by your complaints.

Should you, my brethren, when your minister is dissecting the human character, discover some darling sin in your bosom, hitherto concealed from your notice, be not offended at the preacher—he did not put it there. Of yourselves be ashamed—with yourselves be offended—of your own heart say, "It is desperately wicked;" but thank the honest man who discovered to you the viper, before it gave the mortal bite.

Strange it is that such advice should be necessary; but instances have occurred, and not a few, of persons who have turned most bitter adversaries to their minister—for what? only "for telling them the truth!" The love of delusion is an ancient feature in the human character. "Prophecy smooth things," said the people, "who would not hear the *law of the Lord*; prophecy deceits:" the *false* prophets obeyed, and "the blind led the blind, until both fell into the ditch."

There is one reflexion, blessed be God! that affords us habitual satisfaction. When we discharge our office with fidelity, we "manifest ourselves to the *consciences* of men," although it frequently occasion the loss of their
affections

affections : But be assured, my brethren, that whether ministerial fidelity be pleasant or not, it will always be found profitable.

Give me the preacher who opens the folds of my heart ; who accuses me, convicts me, and condemns me before God ; who loves my soul too well to suffer me to go on in sin, unreprieved, through fear of giving me offence ; who draws the line with accuracy, between the delusions of fancy, and the impressions of grace ; who pursues me from one hiding place to another, until I am driven from every refuge of lies ; who gives me no rest until he sees me, with unfeigned penitence, trembling at the feet of Jesus ; and then, and not till then, soothes my anguish, wipes away my tears, and comforts me with the cordials of grace.

Give me the preacher " who constantly affirms that " they who have believed, be careful to maintain good " works ; " who insists, that a life of peace and communion with God, is utterly abhorrent to the practice of iniquity ; and faithfully reminds me, that " if I sin, that grace may " abound, my damnation is just."

Give me the preacher who pants not for my safety only, but also for my *increase in grace* ; who cautions me, " reproveth me, rebukes me, exhorts me with all long-suffering and doctrine ; " who charges me " to give all diligence to add to my faith, virtue ; and to virtue, " knowlege ; and to knowlege, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to " godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, " charity." Brethren, if Christ have given you such a man as this, receive him as an angel from heaven ; and prize such a pastor as one of the most valuable gifts that can be imparted to the church.

What

What are we better than meteors, my brethren, if we only catch the eye of transient admiration? May you find in your pastor a more permanent and influential luminary! As the rays of the sun penetrate the frozen earth, loosen the clods, and call forth the verdure, the beauty, and the fruitfulness of the plant—so, beneath the divine blessings, may the faithful discourses of our brother sink into your hearts, detach them from the embraces of the world, and cause you to be fruitful in every good and work.

He who sends his hearer away with mere admiration of the speaker, doth nothing; he that sends him away with admiration of himself, doth worse than nothing; but he that sends him away penetrated with conviction, self-accused, self-abhorred, crying for mercy to pardon his guilt, and grace to sanctify his polluted heart;—that preacher, or rather God by him, hath done much—"he hath turned a sinner from the error of his way"—he "shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

To what end do I make these remarks? For this end, my brethren, that the more faithful your pastor is, the more you may honor him as a man of principle, and prize him, as one of all men the most likely to do you good.

You will find it necessary, not only to guard *yourselves* against entertaining any unbecoming sentiments of your minister; but also to discountenance every appearance of it in others: for one complaining, dissatisfied member in a religious society, if encouraged by the rest, will be like the poison in the blood, or the leaven in the meal, which secretly but effectually insinuates itself; until the whole mass be contaminated. "Mark them," says the apostle, "who

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“gratify their own passions, but serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such persons will assume the spirit of zeal, and pretend a concern for truth, but “by their fruits ye shall know them;” and when they are discovered, unless they give the sincerest proofs of penitence, let them be put from the church, as the leper from the camp, lest they defile all who come near them.

Reflect, my brethren, of how much importance it is for *each one* of you to “study the things that make for peace, and things whereby ye may edify one another.” What is an unworthy member of a christian society? What, but a blotch upon the face of beauty—a bramble in a garden of lilies! O that each of you may be preserved from disfiguring or disgracing the church of God!

You must not only be concerned to avoid dishonoring the church, but to be growingly ornamental to it. Most justly doth the apostle represent one end of ministerial instruction, by the effects of the continual nourishment, and the fostering care of a tender nurse upon the body of a healthy child. Christ, saith he, “hath given pastors and teachers, that ye may *grow* up unto a perfect man—to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” You see, brethren, *Christ* is the standard of christian maturity. Before we are “born from above,” we are all in the likeness of the first, the fallen Adam: In regeneration we are formed anew, but we are brought forth babes, and our character is imperfect: Every gradation from a resemblance of the first Adam, to the likeness of the second, is adding another cubit to our spiritual stature; but we shall never be perfect men, until we attain to “the *fulness* of Christ,” and for that we must wait till “we see him as he is.” In this world there is always room to advance;
let

let us then be going on to perfection, and so receive "the sincere milk of the word, as to grow thereby." O what a heaven on earth would that church be, all whose members were thus "growing up unto the head, even Christ;" or to follow the apostle in a figure of greater boldness, and not less expression, "forgetting the things that are behind, "and reaching forth to those which are before, were "pressing towards the mark for the prize of their high "calling of God, in Christ Jesus!"

Let Greece pour forth from all her cities, to gaze on the Olympian contests—with superior satisfaction would I fix my eyes on such a scene as this; and, pointing to the holy company, address each heedless passenger and say, "Behold! so run they not as uncertainly—so contend they "not as those who beat the air—they strive not for a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give "them in that day." O, my brethren, *strive* to be the most zealous, the most affectionate, the most holy people in all the world. "Let your profiting appear unto all "men;" then also shall your teacher, with pious transport exclaim, "I have not run in vain, nor labored in vain."

5. The last thing I would recommend to you in order to improve the gift of Christ, is to render him as *extensive a blessing* as you can. He is given by Christ "to "edify," that is, to *build* the church of God, to put more stones into the sacred edifice, that the superstructure may rise until it become a compleat temple for the Lord.

The enlargement of the church universal, is the wish of every christian, and the increase of a particular christian society, ought to be pursued by each member of it: But seek not, my brethren, to augment your congregation

at the expence of others. Few that are seduced to a new communion, prove for any length of time a comfort or an honor to it. "Covet not," therefore, in this sense, "any thing that is your neighbors;" and do nothing in relation to another evangelic congregation, which you would not approve in the conduct of that congregation to you. There are, indeed, some cases where the admission of members from other communions is just; but would it not be proper, in such cases, to take no steps whatever until the persons who make the application, be referred to their former minister, that he may have an opportunity of serious conversation with them upon the subject, before they desert him? Such an open, generous conduct, would, I should hope, prevent those party feuds and jealousies, which have too often been the disgrace and the torment of christian societies, whose great aim should have been to "walk in love," and to "strive together for the faith of the gospel."

If we may judge of future affection among the churches of Christ in this city, by the singular circumstances of the present day, we may warmly congratulate you on the opening prospect. It is not a common case for a minister to be ordained over one congregation, in the house belonging to another in the same town. In some instances, indeed, it has not been necessary; but in others, too often the one have been too haughty to ask, or the other too unkind to grant. With joy I contemplate *all you*, my brethren, as rising above the government of these unlovely tempers; and most sincerely do I pray, that you may ever consider yourselves as members but of one family, though you find it convenient to occupy different apartments.

Whence then shall you seek for additions? From whence your Lord directs you—from the highways and hedges—from the unawakened, the careless, the prophane:

By

By the awakening, the enlightening, the renewing of such as these, seek to build up that part of the church to which you particularly belong. Look into your families; are there none of this description there? Reflect on the character of your neighbors—are there none among them? These are the persons, whom, by every affectionate persuasion, you must “compel to come in, that the Lord’s house may be filled.”

“Invite the strangers all around

“Your pious march to join,

“And spread the sentiments you feel

“Of faith and love divine.”

Encourage your minister in going among the neighboring villages; get houses opened and registered for him to preach in; use your influence in bringing persons to hear; countenance him by your attendance, when he makes these evangelical excursions; and when, either at home or abroad, you perceive persons affected under the word, speak to them, introduce them to the minister, encourage their attendance, comfort them under the persecutions to which they may be exposed for the sake of religion; and finally, should they decidedly appear renewed persons, and be desirous of partaking with you of the privileges of church-fellowship, let no unnecessary, no unscriptural delay, prevent their admission to the table of the Lord. Thus will you hold up the hands of your pastor, become blessings both to the church and to the world, and prove that you have not received the gift of Christ in vain.

Finally, “If there be any consolation in Christ; if any fellowship of the spirit; if any comfort of love; if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye your pastor’s joy:” that beholding your rapid improvement in every amiable temper,
and

and christian grace; seeing your "love and your zeal
 "abounding yet more and more, in knowlege and in all
 "judgment," and yourselves "filled with the fruits of
 "righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory
 "and praise of God," he may have increasng reason to
 join the happy and affectionate apostle in saying, "What
 "is my hope? What is my joy? What is my crown of
 "rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord
 "Jesus Christ at his coming?"

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Note

Note to p. 61.

IT is matter of just lamentation, that so many professing christians seem to think, that contribution towards the support of a minister, exempts them from all obligation to personal activity in promoting the interests of religion in the world. To the serious consideration of such professors, the following exhortation of the pious Mr. R. Baxter, is affectionately submitted.

“O, if you have the hearts of christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor, ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Alas! there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell; and if they die unregenerate, they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir you to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have as much cause to pity yourselves; for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace. But hath God had much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbors? You need not go far to find objects for your pity: Look but into your streets, or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you never an ignorant, an unregenerate neighbor, that sets his heart below, and neglecteth eternity? O what blessed place do you live in where there is none such! If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or labor with them, or travel with them, or sit still and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldest run and help them, and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knewest but a remedy for their bodily diseases thou wouldest tell it them, or else thou wouldest judge thyself guilty of their death;—what shall we say then of them who know of the remedy for curing souls, and do not reveal it, and persuade men to make use of it! Is it not hypocrisy to pray daily for their conversion and salvation, and never once endeavor to procure it? Alas! that your prayers and your practice should so much disagree! How forward are hypocrites in their sacrifice, and how backward to shew mercy! how forward to censure ministers for neglecting their duties; yea, to expect more from one minister

minister than ten can perform, and yet they make no conscience of neglecting their own; as if other men were to work, and they only to sit by and judge!

Look christians, with an eye of compassion, on the ignorant, ungodly sinners about you: Be not like the priest and levite, that saw the man wounded, and passed by. God did not so pass by you when it was your own case. Are not the souls of your neighbors fallen into the hands of Satan? Doth not their misery cry out to you Help! Help! As you have any compassion towards men in the greatest misery, Help! As you have the hearts of men, and not of tigers in you, Help!

SAINT'S REST, Part III. Chap. xiv. § 1.

1 AU 59

ERRATA.

P. 41, line 24, for BY TIMES, read BETIMES.

P. 29, line 3, for OCCURED, read OCCURRED.

In p. 52 dele the () from part 3.

FINIS.